

Prior to the First Day of School

1. Obtain new year applications, eligibility guidelines, Vermont Appendix from Free and Reduced Website (Google Search 'Free and Reduced Vermont' and/or locate url <http://education.vermont.gov/nutrition/school-nutrition/eligibility-information>)
2. Obtain your school's direct certification list and send direct certification pre-approval notices to families.
3. Update student statuses. Make sure to add siblings/household students to the direct certification list.
4. Apply temporary Carry-Over statuses from last year to remaining students who had benefits last year
5. Send Household Letters and Applications to all students not on the direct certification list
6. Find out if your school food authority is on the Ameliorative Action list and whether or not you Must identify error-prone applications
7. Make sure you understand the difference between USDA eligibility status for claiming (free, reduced or paid) and family billing status (free or paid)

Prior to the Beginning of Each Month

1. Obtain your school's direct certification list
2. Identify students that were not on last month's direct certification list – these are the students with potentially new meal benefits
3. If the student had previously been provided benefits via an application, update your system (Master Lists and Point-Of-Sale or other Benefit Issuance System) to identify the student as 'directly certified', receiving free meals
4. Add siblings / household students to the direct certification list
5. Update statuses in your system
4. Notify the family if new or changed benefits by sending a completed 'Notice of Direct Certification ~ Pre-Approval for Free School Meals' (found in the Vermont Appendix)

When an Application is Received

1. Determine if the application is complete (see page 29 in the USDA Eligibility Manual – 'Determining Completion of Submitted Applications')
2. Approve application (make a benefit determination) within 10 days of receipt; follow up if information is missing or unclear and note follow up information; fully complete 'For School Use Only' Section of Application
3. Send benefit determination letter to family
4. Record benefits on your school's Master List
5. Update statuses in your Master Lists and Benefit Issuance system(s)

On 20th Operating Day

1. Send reminders regarding expiration of previous year's eligibility benefits (for students without

On 30th Operating Day

1. Send expiration of previous year's eligibility benefits; remove benefits after 10 days

October 1

1. Provide your Verification Official your September 30 count of all applications that were approved for benefits. Break down the count according to application type (free income, reduced income, free categorical)

November 1

1. Provide your Verification Official your October 31 count of all applications by that were approved for benefits, by type, with a total number of students on each type of application
2. Also provide a separate count of all directly certified students (make sure any students who have both an application and are on the direct certification list are counted as directly certified only)

When Student Information Changes

1. If benefits are being taken away or reduced (as a result of verification or family request only), allow 10 days after sending the letter before reducing or eliminating benefits in your system (s) (before starting to bill the family)
2. Increases can be made immediately and must be made (billing must stop) within 3 days of approval of benefits
3. Benefits cannot be applied retroactively (they are effective no earlier than the date of approval or the date when you saw the student's name on the direct certification list)

Verifying an Application

1. Begin Verification as soon as you have received your number to verify
2. Randomly select the application(s) to verify
2. Complete and send to each family 'We Must Check Your Application'
3. Follow up at least twice for results
4. Notify family of results by November 15 - use 'Application Verification Results' (in the Vermont Appendix)
5. If benefits are being taken away or reduced, allow 10 days after sending the letter before reducing or eliminating benefits in your system (s) (before starting to bill the family)
6. Report your verification results to your Verification Official. Include, for each verified application:

Approving Officer Checklist

- was the application Verified for Cause?
- was the application Directly Verified?
- was the application Error Prone? (required only for those school food authorities on the Ameliorative Action List)
- was Verification of this application completed by November 15
- what was the original (pre-Verification) determination of benefits?
- what was the post-Verification determination of benefits? (may be the same as pre-)
- how many students are provided benefits from this application?

Before Filing A Claim

1. Make sure all meals counted reflect student benefits
2. Make sure 'Approved Free' and 'Approved Reduced' (in the online claim) correctly count all students who had that meal benefit any time during the claim month